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AN ORGANIZED ANIMAL DISEASE REPORTING PROGRAM

Historical Background

A complete system of animal morbidity and mortality reporting is not in itself a preventive against the in-roads of animal diseases and pests, but it is one of the important foundation stones in a sound structure of animal disease prevention, control and eradication. The U. S. Livestock Sanitary Association, the American Veterinary Medical Association, and several other of the livestock industry groups have recognized the need for such a service and, for many years, have recommended the establishment of a complete reporting system.

As early as 1920, the U. S. Livestock Sanitary Association adopted a resolution recommending that the livestock sanitary authorities gather reliable information concerning the health of livestock and all outbreaks of communicable diseases, such information to be forwarded to the U. S. Department of Agriculture for consolidation and publication.

At the 1944, 1945, and 1947 meetings of the association, the value of such information was discussed, and recommendations were made for the correlation of this information and the establishment of diagnostic laboratories throughout the United States. An extensive survey was conducted in 1947 by the Committee on Morbidity and Mortality on the needs for such information, the ways in which it might be gathered and distributed, and the Federal, State, and private agencies that might participate.

In 1949, the Committee again reviewed the situation, the recommendations were made and adopted by the association along the following lines:

1. To assist the U. S. Bureau of Animal Industry in establishing a system for the collection and dissemination of livestock diseases death statistics, in cooperation with State livestock sanitary officials.
2. To expedite publication and distribution of a manual of nomenclature and one on the diagnosis and epidemiology of economic and transmissible diseases of animals.
3. To prepare the practicing veterinarian and the veterinary student to give complete reports to the livestock sanitary officials of animal diseases within their States.
4. To continue to encourage and support the interest in the program for gathering vital statistics. To this end, the Committee recommended that colleges of veterinary medicine consider the incorporation of a course of vital statistics in the curriculum.

ARS Participation

The Agricultural Research Service has set for itself the task of determining what measures can be taken toward a better reporting of animal sickness and mortality. Under the leadership of Dr. C. D. Van Houweling, a committee has been established with a clear-cut directive to decide whether ARS should proceed in cooperation with the States to establish a nationally coordinated reporting system.

The committee in analyzing the present situation, taking into account all of the advances that have been made in recent years, and in assessing the measure of the need for Federal participation from the standpoint of its responsibilities in the protection of the health of the nation's livestock, has come to the conclusion that there is no question that veterinarians and other professional people support the idea of a national reporting system. Our past experience in attempts at initial financing of any venture makes it crystal-clear that the direct benefits to livestock industry must be fully understood. The interest of veterinarians and other professional people in itself will not serve to gain financial support for a reporting system. Therefore, preliminary outlines of a nationally-coordinated reporting system will be discussed with representatives of the profession and the industry to get the benefits of their ideas in developing a system best suited to serve their needs. We believe that they must have a voice in the discussion and planning if they can be expected to support any plan which may later be put into effect.

Proposed Program

A plan for national animal disease information, presently viewed by the Agricultural Research Service of the U. S. Department of Agriculture, would be based on the following:

Establish an organized program for the collection, processing, and dissemination of information concerning the occurrence of, control of, and prevention of animal diseases.

Support investigation, research, and training and aid the States in the development and promotion of cooperative animal health program.

The purpose of the national animal disease information plan would be to: (1) through the provision of sound statistics to assist disease regulatory officials in determining the scope of the existent and disease problems in their area; (2) to provide research with locations of source materials investigation and research; (3) assist in the provision of facts and theories relating to the spread and control of disease through application of statistical methodology to field and

research data, which will assist in establishing improved designs of control methods; (4) develop channels for the more efficient dissemination of such information; (5) assist the States in the establishment and development of animal disease reporting programs through consultation; (6) publish summaries of quantitative and qualitative information concerning animal diseases; and (7) assist in the application of such information to improve animal health programs.

The proposed title for this operation within the U. S. Department of Agriculture is "Office of Animal Disease Information".

It is proposed that the program would be developed as follows:

First Year: (1) Integrate, improve methods and uniformity, and methods of dissemination of existing animal disease information already prepared in the Department. (2) Prepare a simplified monthly summary of disease incidence as reported by the States, with a simple annual summary. (3) Render assistance to the States in the establishment and promotion of organized animal disease reporting programs in the States, striving for uniformity of methods to maintain a comparability of information. (4) Assist in the development of educational materials, designed to improve reporting, directed to the producer, processor, veterinary students, and the practitioner. (5) Assist in the development of correlated materials such as a handbook of communicable disease information to be used in connection with the disease reporting. (6) Furnish States weekly reports of new or unusual diseases that are reported to the Agricultural Research Service.

Second Year: (1) Continue and improve on items 1 through 4 above. (2) Develop plans for a weekly report of important diseases, to be correlated with disease investigation services. (3) Develop plans for an organized reservoir of animal disease statistics, including geographical and seasonal patterns in particular. (IEM Records). (4) Continue item 5 above, as indicated.

Third Year: (1) Establish and develop a weekly report of important diseases and cooperate in the development of related services; i. e., investigative, laboratory diagnosis, control programs. (2) Test plans for reservoir of statistics by development of reports on certain specified diseases. (3) Work toward completing the enlistment of States in the reporting program, and continue to improve the quality and uniformity of information. (4) Assist and encourage the States in the development of programs for the collection of collateral information and its utilization; particularly from the State inspected stockyards, sales barns, slaughter and processing plants, and other diagnostic laboratories. (5) Design a brochure for the instruction of veterinary students and to encourage reporting by practitioners. (6) Continue the development of disease reporting information and education materials, planning the incorporation of collected data to

demonstrate points. (7) Establish an organized pattern for annual summaries and reports to provide in one source reference a comprehensive picture of the existence of disease, and a definition of areas, both geographic and subject-wise, which should be investigated.

Fourth Year: (1) Evaluate the progress of the plan, with recommendations for re-orientation, revision, and incorporation of new ideas and techniques. (2) Based on item 1, draft a plan for the continuance of the program after the fifth year. (3) Continue the development and improvement of items under the previous years.

Fifth Year: (1) Draft a report of the accomplishments of the plan, to be completed when a full five years of data become available; to center around the benefits to the producer, processor, and consumer on the one hand, and the assistance provided to the practitioner, laboratory, and regulatory official on the other hand. Such a report might possibly be prepared before this time. (2) Continue with the other activities of the program.

Benefits Cited that Will Come from A Reporting Program

The benefits that can be expected from animal-disease reporting will depend upon the application of the information collected -- it should be used to provide intelligent methods of disease prevention and control. These benefits can be attained only if animal-disease reporting is carried out on a broad cooperative basis.

Actually, if these claims are valid, everybody will benefit from a complete animal-health program. The first to benefit is the livestock producer. Adequate information on the incidence of disease will enable him to protect his own livestock through his own efforts. He will, furthermore, get better service from his veterinarian and from local, State, and Federal animal and public health officials.

The practicing veterinarian will benefit in a number of ways. He will receive reports of the occurrence of disease in the area of his practice and in other areas from which there is danger of disease spreading to his territory. Combined with his own knowledge, he will be better prepared on the basis of this information to combat diseases already existing in his area and to prevent the introduction of disease into his territory. Sound immunization programs can be built on this basis and the required measures of prevention and control can be taken.

Based on sound information, livestock sanitary officials can issue regulations better fitted to the actual conditions. They can provide more dependable advice to producers when they can be certain that imported stock will not spread disease from herd to herd.

Local, State, and Federal public health officials will be distinctly benefited by reports on animal disease. Usually, the animal diseases transmissible to man are reported first in the animal population. Such reports can alert public health officials to the possibility of human cases. Measures can be taken by human health agencies to prevent transmission of these diseases to human beings. Human health agencies can cooperate with animal health agencies in eliminating the hazard, particularly where their administrative spheres overlap. The correlation of human- and animal-disease reports may also result in the discovery of new diseases communicable to man.

Institutions conducting research on animal diseases would be provided with information on the occurrence of diseases that are known to need investigation. Or, the reports might point up the potential significance of a disease and show that for various reasons it should be investigated. Information will indicate where suitable research materials can be found, and it may define problem areas suitable for field studies of the spread and control of a disease. Reports will make available materials for statistical research on the occurrence and control of disease -- a valuable adjunct to formulating and reviewing the plans and programs for animal-disease prevention and control.

Medical and veterinary officials concerned with preventive medicine will have material on which they can evaluate preventive and control measures, either for field or experimental situations. Sick-rate data are claimed to have helped officials of one state plan their animal health program so that the most effective use is being made of its tax funds. Disease reports will give evidence of the success or failure of an animal-health program; continued economic support of the program may depend on proof of its success, which may be available in these reports. This evidence may also be of value to the producer. The advantage of a disease-free herd may be apparent only through comparative analysis of data from diseased and disease-free areas.

The benefits of animal-disease reporting are claimed to extend to those engaged in or allied to the production and marketing of animals and animal products, including processors, feed and biologics manufacturers. The benefits to manufacturers of biologics are very apparent, for nearly all immunization and treatment depends on their products. If biologics manufacturers cooperate in an animal health program, their services will improve in two ways: First, knowing the estimated distribution of various diseases, they can have the right quantities of the right product on hand at the right time and place. Secondly, research on the cause, treatment, and vaccine required will result in the development of new products.

Ultimately, the consumer will benefit through the availability of more nutritious and disease-free meat, milk, eggs, and other products.



